

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing user assistance information, the method comprising:  
receiving a question from a user;  
identifying an operational context that is associated with the received  
question;  
identifying a category that is associated with the identified context; and  
searching for at least one answer to the question, wherein the searching is  
based at least in part upon the identified category and the received question.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein identifying context comprises one of the  
following: determining which of a plurality of web pages have been visited by the user;  
identifying the time that the user accessed the plurality of web pages; determining a  
format in which the user transmitted the question; or determining the hardware  
environment of the user.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the determined format is one of the  
following: input from a field in a web page, an e-mail message or an electronic chat  
question.

4. The method of Claim 1, additionally comprising:  
determining whether a selected one of the at least one answer is  
associated with the identified context and the received question; and  
if no answer is associated with the identified context and the received  
question, identifying the question as an unanswered question.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein determining whether any answer is  
associated with the identified context and the received question comprises determining  
whether a confidence threshold is exceeded.

6. The method of Claim 4, additionally comprising associating an answer with  
the unanswered question.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein associating an answer comprises generating a web page containing the answer to the question.

5 8. The method of Claim 7, additionally comprising providing the associated answer in response to receiving a question from a second user, wherein the associated answer is immediately available to the second user subsequent to the answer being associated with the question.

10 9. The method of Claim 5, additionally comprising generating an e-mail containing the answer to the question.

10. The method of Claim 1, additionally comprising searching for the answer using at least in part the identified category.

15 11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the identified category is a user definable description.

12. A system for providing user assistance, the system comprising:

20 a question module adapted to receive at least one question from a user;  
a context module adapted to identify at least one category that is associated with the context in which the question was received; and  
a knowledge module adapted to identify an answer to a received question, wherein the answer is derived using at least in part the identified category.

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13. A system for providing user assistance, the system comprising:

30 a suggestion module adapted to provide a list of questions and answers to a user in response to a request for assistance, wherein the list of questions and answers is customized based at least in part upon a category that is associated with the questions; and

a statistics module adapted to provide the list of questions, wherein the list of questions includes a selected number of frequently asked questions.

14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the statistics module identifies unanswered questions and additionally comprising an authoring module adapted to associate answers with the unanswered questions.

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15. The system of Claim 14, wherein the authoring module associates answers with the unanswered questions automatically.

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16. The system of Claim 12, additionally comprising a statistics module adapted to provide a list of questions.

17. The system of Claim 16, wherein the statistics module arranges the questions in a most frequently asked order.

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18. The system of Claim 16, wherein the statistics module arranges the questions in a least frequently asked order.

19. A system for providing user assistance, the system comprising:

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a question module adapted to receive at least one question from a user;

a context module adapted to identify at least one category that is associated with the context in which the question was received;

a knowledge module adapted to identify an answer to a received question, wherein the answer is derived using at least in part the identified category;

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an authoring module adapted to identify unanswered questions and adapted to associate an answer with the unanswered questions;

a statistics module adapted to provide a list of questions and answers that are associated with the identified category; and

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a suggestion module adapted to provide the list of questions and answers to the user in response to a request for assistance.

20. The system of Claim 19, wherein the authoring module associates an answer with the unanswered questions automatically.

21. A system for providing user assistance, the system comprising:

a question module adapted to receive at least one question from a user;

a context module adapted to identify at least one category that is associated with the context in which the question was received; and

a knowledge module adapted to identify an answer to a received question, wherein the answer is derived using at least in part the identified category.

22. A system for providing user assistance information, the system comprising:

means for receiving a question from a user;

means for identifying an operational context that is associated with the received question; and

means for searching for at least one answer to the question, wherein the searching is based at least in part upon the identified context and the received question.

23. The system of Claim 22, wherein identifying context comprises one of the following: determining which of a plurality of web pages have been visited by the user; identifying the time that the user accessed the plurality of web pages; determining a format in which the user transmitted the question; and determining the hardware environment of the user.

24. The system of Claim 23, wherein the determined format is one of the following: input from a field in a web page, an e-mail message or an electronic chat question.

25. The system of Claim 22, additionally comprising:

means for determining whether an answer is associated with the identified context and the received question; and

means for identifying the question as either an unanswered question or an answered question.

26. The system of Claim 25, additionally comprising means for associating an answer with the unanswered question.

5           27. The system of Claim 26, wherein the means for associating an answer comprises means for generating a web page that describes the answer.

28. The system of Claim 26, wherein the means for associating an answer comprises means for generating an e-mail that describes the answer.

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29. The system of Claim 22, additionally comprising:

          means for identifying a category that is associated with identified context; and

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          means for searching for the answer using at least in part the identified category.

30. A method of providing user assistance information, the method comprising:

          identifying a context that is associated with a user;

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          determining which of a plurality of categories is associated with the identified context;

          identifying a plurality of most frequently asked questions that are associated with the determined category; and

          displaying the most frequently asked questions to the user.

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31. A method of providing user assistance information, the method comprising:

          determining a category that is associated with a user question, wherein the determined category is based at least in part upon which web page of a plurality of web pages the user has most recently accessed;

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          identifying a plurality of most frequently asked questions that are associated with the category; and

          displaying the most frequently asked questions to the user.

32. A method of providing user assistance information, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of questions;

determining whether each of the questions has an associated answer  
located in a knowledge database;

storing the questions which have no associated answer located in the  
knowledge database; and

receiving at least one new answer from an administrative user for each of  
the questions stored in the knowledge database which have no associated  
answer.